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NATIONAL AID TO PUBLIC SCHOOLS.

THE advantages of the public school system of our country are now universally admitted; yet this institution, like other advantageous elements in the development of social and national life, has had to push its way upward from a small beginning against a host of opposing forces, such as prejudice, superstition, and dogmatism.

In the year 1635, Boston, then but five years old, resolved that "our brother Philemon Permout be appointed school-master for the instruction and education of our children," thirty acres of land being appropriated at the same time for his support. Thus was the seed sown that has developed into our present extensive system of education. But five years' experience taught our pilgrim fathers that there were other difficulties to be overcome than simply providing means for the support of the teacher; parents were found so regardless of the welfare of their children as to wholly neglect the advantages offered them. Hence it was enjoined, that "whenever a family shall be found in which so barbarous a state of things exists, as that the head thereof did neither by his own efforts, nor those of others, endeavor to give his children and servants sufficient instruction to enable them to read fluently the English language, and acquire a knowledge of the penal laws, a penalty of twenty shillings should be imposed for such neglect."

Here the word "servants" is worthy of attention, and if we were disposed to speculation might prompt the question, What would have been the effect of such a clause in the codes of the Southern States in their earlier days? Had such a law been in force, we should never have had such a record on our census

tables as the following, which is but typical of the state of education in the South at the time designated :—

ATTENDING SCHOOL, 1860.

	Total.	Native	For'gn Born.	WHITE.		COLORED.		Total White Popula- tion.	Total Slave Popula- tion.
				Male.	Female	Male.	Female		
Mississippi.	66,524	66,147	377	35,308	31,214	2	353,899	309,878

Two slaves attending school, in 1860, in the whole State of Mississippi out of a slave population of over three hundred thousand !

But let us return to our pilgrim fathers. Finding that punishing the parent did not instruct the child, they further ordained that the children and servants of such parents and masters as, after warning, persisted in neglect, might be placed by the authorities under the guardianship of other heads of families—the boys until the age of twenty-one and the girls until eighteen. It was also further ordained, in 1647, that every town of fifty families should be bound to support a school-master competent to teach reading and writing, and every town of one hundred and fifty families to support a grammar school. Such was the commencement made by our New England ancestors in the work of education ; and although the turmoil, strife, and hardships of the Revolutionary War well-nigh destroyed the little plant which had sprung from this seed, yet there can be no doubt that to this germ we owe our present educational system.

The progress of popular education, however, was slow and fitful until about the year 1835. At this time, the public mind becoming aware of the alarming amount of illiteracy existing, a movement was begun, of which I believe Horace Mann was the leading spirit, to remedy this evil. This resulted in the adoption of the present common school system, which has wrought so marvelous a change in many of our States. These efforts have been stimulated and aided by the policy adopted by the General Government of setting aside a certain amount of public land in aid of education, and of granting certain sums as equivalents to the States which did not receive any benefit from these land

grants. With these exceptions—which were undoubtedly of great value—the States have been left to themselves in this most important work; no attempt to grant permanent national aid or to institute a national system of education has been made. But States, like subordinate communities, are subject to inequalities in advantages and hinderances, so that it is not possible for them all to advance with the same rapidity in any one line of development. One has advantages in which another is deficient; one is subject to disadvantages and drawbacks from which another is free. Difference in numbers, difference in wealth, commerce, etc., even where equal efforts are put forth, will cause a proportional difference in the results, a fact specially evident in reference to education.

As the rapid advance in the means of intercommunication has effected such vast changes in our social relations that the people of the several States are brought into more intimate relation with each other than subsisted between the different sections of the larger States half a century ago,—what was true then of the effect of illiteracy in parts of a State upon the general welfare of the individual commonwealth is now true in regard to the nation as a whole. And the reasons which were then advanced in favor of a system of common schools, aided and supported by the State, are as applicable now to the nation as a whole. As it was then found necessary to provide a system of education applying to the whole population of a State, so now we have reached that stage in our progress when it becomes necessary, if we would meet the demands of the age, to provide means for extending this system in its most advanced and complete form over the whole country. That this can be done only by the General Government must be admitted by every one who will give the subject a moment's thoughtful consideration.

How should this be done? I answer, first, that it should be done in such a way as to be just and fair to all parts of the country, and that the burden may be borne, as nearly as possible, equally by all sections; second, that it should be done in such a manner as will cause the least possible disturbance to the system now in operation; and, third, that the least possible official machinery should be used.

To meet these several requirements, there is, so far as I can see, but one plan—and that is to distribute annually to the several States and territories a certain portion of the Govern-

ment revenue, to be applied by them, on certain conditions and under proper restrictions, to the aid and advancement of the present common school system. In no other way can the burden be apportioned so equally, nor can any other means be devised by which it will be made less oppressive.

The reasons for distributing this fund to the several States and territories, and having them expend it in educating the children, are doubtless apparent to every one. In most, if not all of them, there are already systems of free schools and organized plans of education aided and fostered by the State or territory, and also the appliances and corps of officers necessary to carry on this work. For the General Government to establish a separate national system of education would, as a matter of course, not only entail upon the people an additional and unnecessary expense, but would undoubtedly bring the national and State authorities into constant conflict. In other words, it is impossible to carry on in the same territory, at the same time, two distinct systems of public schools for the same children. It is, therefore, apparent that if the General Government undertakes to assist in this work, it must do so by aiding, building up, and perfecting the system now in operation, and not by any method which will conflict with it. But this aid should be granted only upon certain conditions and under certain restrictions. First, the States should be required to adopt a uniform system; second, no State or territory should be allowed its proportion of the amount appropriated except upon the condition that such State or territory appropriate at least an equal amount for the same purpose; third, the National Bureau of Education should be charged with the duty of executing the provisions of the appropriation acts, and should also have the right to decide whether the conditions were properly complied with.

If the step proposed should ever be determined upon by Congress, it is probable that the two most difficult points to decide satisfactorily would be the gross amount to be appropriated, and the ratio of distribution. I shall not attempt to discuss the former, as that would require the presentation of a large array of figures and statistics, but will simply state as my opinion that the annual appropriation for this purpose should not be less than forty million dollars; nor do I think it would be wise, at least for some years to come, to have it exceed sixty millions. To the second point, "the ratio of distribution," I propose devoting the remainder of this article.

A proposition has been brought forward in Congress to appropriate some ten or fifteen million dollars for this purpose, to be distributed only to the States showing the greatest percentage of illiteracy. While the object aimed at by this proposition is a good one, yet it is so manifestly unjust and inequitable that it were better to give no Government aid than to give it in this way. Assuming that all States and territories in which the illiteracy exceeds twenty-five per cent. should receive the benefit of this appropriation, we find, by examining the census returns of 1880 (Census Bulletin No. 303), that these are Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, New Mexico, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, and Virginia. As a matter of course, in most of these colored persons who are illiterate compose a very large proportion of the population, and this fact forms the chief argument in favor of the proposition mentioned. But let us look a little below the surface and see whether justice and equity require this unequal or partial distribution of aid. In 1860, according to the census of that year, out of 32,629 colored children attending school in the United States, there were but 1235 in school in these States. In fact, as is well known, slaves were prohibited from obtaining even the rudiments of an education. The illiteracy, therefore, of the colored population, now complained of as such a serious burden, is the result of the deliberate policy of these States in the past. But admitting that the sins of the fathers should not be visited upon the children,—and that as all this has been changed, we should not cavil over the cause, but aid in remedying the evil effect,—let me ask whether, even in this view of the case, such a proposition as that referred to, if carried into effect, would be just to the other portions of the country?

Turning to the Census Bulletin before quoted, we find that this startling degree of illiteracy is not by any means wholly due to the presence of the colored population, but to an unwillingness on the part of the people of those States to tax themselves as others do in order to maintain public schools. We find from this that in Alabama, 24.7 per cent. of the white population, of ten years and upward, are unable to write; in Arkansas, 25 per cent.; in Florida, 19.9 per cent.; in Georgia, 22.9 per cent.; in Kentucky, 22 per cent.; in Louisiana, 18.4 per cent.; in Mississippi, 16.3 per cent.; in North Carolina, 31.5 per cent.; in South Carolina, 21.9 per cent.; in Tennessee, 27.3 per cent.; in Texas, 15.3 per cent.; and in Virginia, 18.2 per cent. On the other hand, the ratio in

Connecticut is 5.5; in Dakota, a pioneer territory, 4.2; in Illinois, 5.9; in Indiana, 7; in Iowa, 3.8; in Kansas, 3.7; in Maine, 4.2; in Massachusetts, 6.4; in Michigan, 4.8; in Minnesota, 6; in Nebraska, 3.5; in New Hampshire, 5; in New Jersey and New-York, each, 5.3; Ohio, 4.9; Pennsylvania, 6.7; Vermont, 2.9; and Wisconsin, 5.6.

But even this does not bring out fully the contrast. If we limit our comparison to native white persons alone, the difference is still more glaring, as seen by the following ratios:

Alabama.....	25.0	Connecticut.....	1.0
Arkansas.....	25.5	Dakota.....	1.8
Florida.....	20.7	Illinois.....	5.3
Georgia.....	23.2	Indiana.....	6.8
Kentucky.....	22.8	Iowa.....	2.6
Louisiana.....	19.8	Kansas.....	3.1
Mississippi.....	16.6	Maine.....	1.9
North Carolina.....	31.7	Massachusetts.....	0.7
South Carolina.....	22.4	Michigan.....	2.3
Tennessee.....	27.8	Minnesota.....	1.9
Texas.....	13.9	Nebraska.....	2.3
Virginia.....	18.5	New Hampshire.....	1.1
		New Jersey.....	3.2
		New York.....	2.2
		Ohio.....	4.3
		Pennsylvania.....	2.9
		Vermont.....	2.4
		Wisconsin.....	2.0

This shows that the percentage of illiteracy among the native whites in the Southern States is, with a single exception (Texas), greater than when the foreign element is included. This state of affairs certainly cannot be attributed to the presence of the colored population. If we compare the amount expended per capita for the enrolled pupils in the public schools, we find evidence of the same unwillingness or failure, from some cause, on the part of most of these same States to contribute liberally to the support of their public schools.

In Alabama, the amount is \$2.09; in Georgia, \$1.99; Kentucky, \$3.85; Mississippi, \$2.70; North Carolina, \$1.12; Virginia, \$3.82; South Carolina, \$2.42; while in Connecticut, the amount is \$17.80; Illinois, \$9.61; Iowa, \$12.25; Massachusetts, \$14.93; New Jersey, \$9.48; New-York, \$10.09; Ohio, \$8.59, and Rhode Island, \$11.63 (Report of the Commissioner of Education, 1880, p. 413). If we compare the whole amount raised by taxation

for school purposes in 1880 with the number of white pupils alone it gives a per capita expenditure in Alabama of only \$3.50 ; in Georgia of only \$3 ; in North Carolina of only \$2.58 ; in South Carolina of only \$5.30, and in Tennessee of only \$3.16. (I can give no other examples for want of data.)

The only absolutely correct test in this comparison would be the percentage obtained by comparing the amount raised by taxation for school purposes with the real value of the property in the State. But the fact that a large portion is raised by local taxes, and that the assessed value as compared with the real value varies widely in different States, renders this impossible. Using the assessed value, as given in Mr. Spofford's American Almanac for 1880, I find that the rate is generally highest in the North-western States and lowest in the Eastern and Southern States. For example: in Alabama it is 00.21; in Arkansas, 00.22; in Connecticut, 00.39; in Georgia, 00.20; Illinois, 00.85; in Iowa, 01.04; in Kentucky, 00.27; Massachusetts, 00.28; Missouri, 00.41; Nebraska, 00.81; New-York, 00.36; North Carolina, 00.22; Ohio, 00.43, etc.

Now, if the General Government should undertake to do anything in aid of common school education that will be adequate to the wants of our people, it should be done with a liberal hand and in a manner that will show manifest justice to all sections. While ten or fifteen millions may, and undoubtedly will, do much good if granted to one section on the conditions already named, those who are imposing heavy burdens upon themselves in other sections to educate their children will have just grounds for complaint of unfairness. While Illinois taxes her people over four-fifths of one per cent. of the assessed value of her property, Iowa over 1 per cent., and Ohio two-fifths of one per cent. for school purposes, in addition to the revenue raised from other sources, Georgia taxes her people but one-fifth of one per cent., North Carolina but one-fifth of one per cent., and Alabama and Georgia the same, for this purpose.

This difference cannot be charged to inability, for there is no reason why Georgia, North Carolina, and other States may not tax their people to the same extent as Illinois, Iowa, or Ohio, to educate their children. Instead, therefore, of charging this difference to inability, we are compelled to attribute it to neglect or want of appreciation of the value of education. For the Government now to grant this help to States which have so willfully

neglected to provide such means of education as are within their power, would not only be unjust, but would have too much the appearance of rewarding the negligent who are unwilling to help themselves. I believe it will be a wise policy on the part of the General Government to grant aid to the States for their common schools, and to grant it with a liberal hand, but I believe such aid should be distributed to all alike,—to those who have striven most to help themselves as well as those who have been negligent. The only way in which this can be fairly and equitably done will, as I believe, be by distributing such funds as may be appropriated for this purpose to the States and territories in proportion to population. I am as desirous as any one can be to assist those States which are in the background in this respect, for I am fully aware that most of them labor under difficulties which do not apply to their sister States, but I think the Government should be just in distributing its favors.

A distribution in proportion to illiteracy is, as we have seen, unequal and unjust. If made according to the number of children of school age or enrolled, it will then depend on unreliable statistics and on figures made up by States and territories, and not on statistics made under Government control. The only entirely satisfactory enumeration is that of population made by the National Census Bureau. This is a sure and satisfactory basis, and a distribution made upon it cannot be complained of as unjust or unequal.

JOHN A. LOGAN.